

Traffic, Traffic, Traffic— Where Have We Been And Where Are We Going?

The effort to solve transportation issues in the historic center of the community has been a long, bumpy and sometimes disrupted trip. The three Partners are hopeful the Antelope Valley transportation routes will now make the trip more enjoyable and faster.

A Brief Traffic History

For decades the University of Nebraska-Lincoln has tried to solve the pedestrian and auto situation at 16th and 17th Streets on the Lincoln campus but there has been no solution. Also, the community sought to solve the traffic flow problems from northeast Lincoln and downtown, by designing and

unsolved. Citizen participation in the Antelope Valley study reached the consensus that acceptable transportation solutions to the puzzle can no longer include routes that materially harm the core neighborhoods. In fact, public input during the Study set a course that required the new Antelope Valley routes be on the edge of residential neighborhoods and include community revitalization programs to help strengthen the historic core neighborhoods, downtown and the university campus. This difficult assignment has meant that the new roadway cannot be built with the sole motivation of moving cars. The benefits of neighborhoods must be a key component of planning the new roadway.

Diverting arterial traffic from the middle of the UNL campus to the eastern edge is another Study objective. A traffic study found over one-half of the 30,000 motorists that travel through the campus on 16th and 17th Streets per day are not University affiliated, but merely passing through on their way to north and northeast Lincoln. Anybody that has traveled these streets through the campus knows this excess traffic combined with the more than 3,000 students walking across 16th and 17th Streets to go to their classes, residence halls, Greek houses and commuter lots, is a serious safety issue. The new boulevard combined with new University parking garages next to the new roadway would combine to reduce 16th and 17th Street traffic north of "R" Street from 30,000 motor vehicles per day down to just 7,000.

A New East-West Roadway

In addition to the North-South Roadway, a new four lane East-West Roadway would start at 9th and 10th Streets near the south approach of the 10th Street overpass and the north side of Memorial Stadium. The new roadway would extend eastward immediately north of Avery Avenue, first on the south side of the BNSF mainline tracks intersecting with the North-South Roadway on an overpass structure at a signaled intersection near the BNSF mainline railway.

After the North-South Roadway intersection, the six lane East-West Roadway would bridge over the BNSF Railway and parallel the BNSF mainline tracks on the north side replacing the diagonal road on the south side of State Fair Park and then underneath the North 27th Street overpass where a connection would be made to North 27th Street and Cornhusker Highway. This stretch of the East-West Roadway is included in the Phase 1 Projects, and when completed, will allow the City to close the North 14th and North 17th Streets at-grade rail crossings.

In a subsequent phase, the East-West Roadway splits and one branch goes primarily north crossing Cornhusker Highway and following Dead Man's Run waterway on the east side where it will meet another new roadway the City is building this year at North 33rd and Superior Streets. The City's road project this year extends North 33rd Street north near the proposed North High School site and curves the roadway back to North 27th Street at Fletcher Avenue.

The other branch of the East-West Roadway will go underneath the BNSF mainline tracks near 29th Street. The underpass will then further branch and one stretch will connect with the four-lane Huntington/Leighton Avenue at North 33rd Street. Another branch will parallel the BNSF mainline tracks on the south side and connect into Adams

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Waiting for trains to pass is a daily occurrence for pedestrians and cars.

acquiring over 300 properties for the controversial road project, known as the Northeast Radial. In 1981, voters put the brakes on the Northeast Radial Project. The community had to back up as part of the Northeast Radial Reuse Project and dispose of the acquired right-of-way and repair the resulting scars through some of Lincoln's oldest and historic neighborhoods.

Meanwhile, the Comprehensive Plan was amended in 1997. The Plan adds two major employment centers and several commercial shopping areas along North 27th Street, north of Cornhusker Highway. Travel time on North 27th Street is already unacceptable for most motorists and yet these new proposed land uses continue to add to the 27th Street congestion problem.

Lincoln continues to grow and another major employment center and more shopping centers are designated in the Comprehensive Plan, along North 84th Street between Holdrege Street and Havelock Avenue. More traffic is trying to travel through Northeast Lincoln and trying to cross the Burlington Northern Santa Fe tracks.

When the Antelope Valley Study started in 1996, were an average of 50 coal and freight trains per day that diagonally cut across Lincoln, blocking cars and trucks up to four hours in a 24 hour period. Four years later, railroad officials report there are 70 trains blocking traffic up to five hours a day. Railroad projections indicate that the train traffic will continue to grow. Police, ambulance and fire officials are increasingly frustrated and have to take slower alternative routes. Other citizens are now late for work, school, appointments and athletic events at the Bob Devaney Center.

Traffic—Difficult Puzzle To Solve

The Antelope Valley Study has been trying to solve a multitude of traffic dilemma issues that to date remained

Over a hundred potential traffic solutions were analyzed and discussed by the community over the last four years. Eventually, the best of these plans was consolidated into the Antelope Valley Draft Single Package. Further refinements were made and the revised plan became known as the Amended Draft Single Package.

A New North-South Roadway

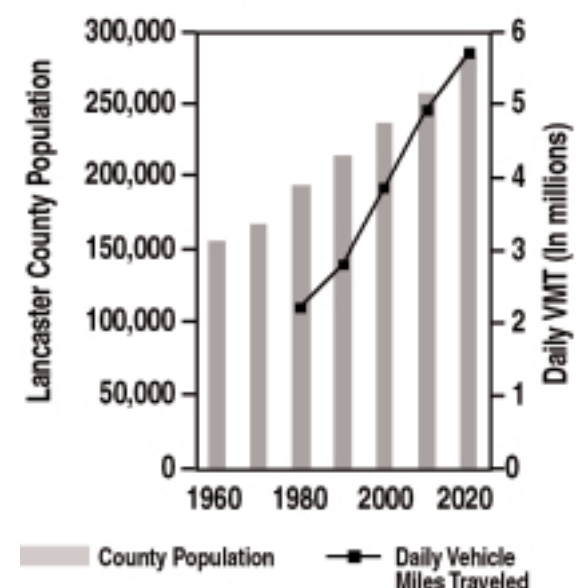
In Phase 1, the new four lane North-South Roadway would start at "K" and "L" Streets and be routed along the 19th Street corridor on the east side of the UNL City Campus, curving along the east side of UNL's Beadle Center, continuing northwest to bridge over the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) mainline railway west of the Bob Devaney Center, and connecting to 14th Street near Military Road.

The North-South Roadway would be well landscaped and in parts of Downtown initially include a 70-foot wide planted median to create an attractive boulevard effect. This roadway would be built as a four-lane divided road with the potential of widening to six lanes if traffic growth so demands. If two additional through lanes were ever needed, the landscaped median would be reduced to a 46-foot wide landscaped median.

The design of the North-South Roadway would aid in the potential creation of super sized blocks, or big land pieces in east downtown that could attract a new supermarket or office buildings in a campus setting.

Another piece of the broader picture is the creation of an eastern border for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The boulevard travels through the University's land where it threads between the Beadle Center and the Malone Center. This forms a solid eastern border for the University, which has often expanded upon the Malone neighborhood in the past.

Population and Traffic Trends and Forecasts



Source: 1994 Lincoln-Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan

Questions Regarding the Northeast Radial and Antelope Valley

Q People often mention the failed Northeast Radial—what is that?

A The concept of the Northeast Radial began in 1952 as a roadway that would connect downtown/central Lincoln with developing suburbs to the north and east. Capital Parkway had just recently been constructed to serve southeast Lincoln and many business leaders and elected officials felt a similar roadway was needed for northeast Lincoln. From 1968 through 1974, the City acquired 287 properties, displacing many families and businesses, in an effort to acquire the necessary road right of ways in advance of the proposed road construction.

Oil prices rose and federal road funds diminished. Time passed and the road was not constructed. Many of the acquired properties were deteriorating causing the abutting neighborhoods to decline. Sentiment began to change. In 1980, the City Council voted 5-2 to kill the Northeast Radial. Road supporters decided to put it on the 1981 ballot. The resulting campaign further divided the community. The ballot results showed 17,524 against the Northeast Radial and 11,644 in support. The road project was defeated and dropped.

Q What did the City do with the 287 acquired properties totaling approximately 83 acres?

A Some homes were initially demolished and turned into vacant lots neighbors thought were poorly maintained. Other homes deteriorated and after the Radial's defeat were demolished to facilitate land assembly. The City and local neighborhoods developed the Radial Reuse Project, which identified the most viable vacant lands that could be resold to families and homebuilders to construct new homes. The balance of the vacant lands became a bike trail, various pocket parks and used for other public purposes.

Q Aren't the Antelope Valley proposed road solutions the same as for the Northeast Radial?

A Yes and no. The need to provide better traffic circulation between downtown, the university campus and north and northeast Lincoln did not go away when the voters turned down the Northeast Radial. In fact, traffic city-wide has dramatically increased,

there has been significant development in both north and northeast Lincoln during the last 20 years, and traffic congestion in these areas has worsened. Portions of the two Antelope Valley roadways have similarities with the Northeast Radial.

Both concepts start near the end of Interstate 180 at 9th and 10th Streets and parallel the Burlington Northern Santa Fe tracks.

Both concepts have components that utilize the 19th Street corridor.

And both concepts have routes that serve northeast Lincoln.

While both share similar start and destination points, the Northeast Radial route cut right through and divided residential neighborhoods. The Antelope Valley roadways are generally located on commercial streets, University lands, and State Fair properties, which collectively skirt around residential neighborhoods.

While it is difficult to compare roadway plans and costs in a simple manner, the Northeast Diagonal plans with an elevated crossing of the railroad by the Devaney Center was estimated to cost about \$19 million in 1980, and that would be about \$50 million in 1999 dollars because of escalation in construction costs. A slightly similar part of the Antelope Valley roadway plan would cost \$40 to \$50 million in today's dollars.

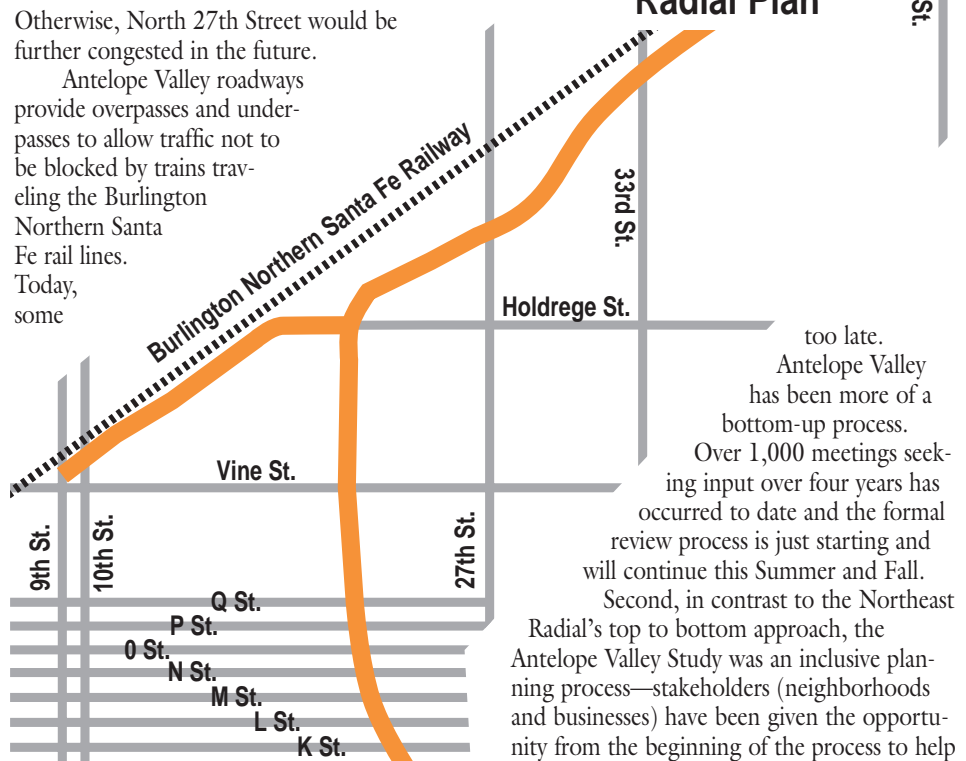
Q Compared to the Northeast Radial, what are the 'extra' traffic benefits that Antelope Valley provides?

A Antelope Valley starts at "K" and "L" Streets and completes a loop around downtown and the University campus. Cars will be able to circulate on the edge of downtown, thus avoiding the travel time going through the downtown area. This will provide more road capacity for those cars wanting to use the downtown streets.

Antelope Valley provides Northwest Lincoln better connections by tying into Cornhusker Highway at North 14th Street. Antelope Valley has a road link that helps create North 33rd Street north of Cornhusker Highway. This will help accommodate the large existing and proposed developments in North Lincoln along North 27th between Cornhusker Highway and Interstate 80.

Otherwise, North 27th Street would be further congested in the future.

Antelope Valley roadways provide overpasses and underpasses to allow traffic not to be blocked by trains traveling the Burlington Northern Santa Fe rail lines. Today, some



70 coal trains a day block traffic over five hours in a 24 hour period. The Phase 1 Projects would eliminate two at-grade rail crossings (N. 14th and N. 17th Streets) and the next phase of the Amended Draft Single Package would eliminate two more at-grade rail crossings (N. 33rd and Adams Street).

Q What assurances does the community have that Antelope Valley roadways will not cause a big community fight like the Northeast Radial?

A With a proposal the size and scope of Antelope Valley, it is expected there will be debate and some disagreement. The three Partners have spent a great deal of time and money not to repeat the mishaps associated with the Northeast Radial project. First, the two concepts' planning processes, public input and review and purposes are substantially different. To the community activists involved in both processes, the Northeast Radial road project was an attempt by a handful of business leaders and officials to impose a top-down solution. The Northeast Radial did not actively seek the public's input until it was

too late. Antelope Valley has been more of a bottom-up process. Over 1,000 meetings seeking input over four years has occurred to date and the formal review process is just starting and will continue this Summer and Fall. Second, in contrast to the Northeast Radial's top to bottom approach, the Antelope Valley Study was an inclusive planning process—stakeholders (neighborhoods and businesses) have been given the opportunity from the beginning of the process to help design the study's procedural processes as well as actively review alternatives in public forums, before it is declared a "project" and approved for construction.

Third, the Antelope Valley Study is far more comprehensive in terms of the issues and needs that were addressed, the geographic areas studied, and how the Study was approached. The Northeast Radial was a single purpose "road project" many thought would seriously harm neighborhood vitality. On the other hand, Antelope Valley has looked at the bigger picture and identified storm water management, transportation improvements and community revitalization issues that work in concert to strengthen the historic core. Many critics thought the Northeast Radial proposed route and process seriously harmed abutting neighborhoods. The Phase 1 Projects are designed around the belief that the attractive waterway, landscaped roadway and proposed community revitalization strategies will improve the historic core. These reinvestment opportunities will provide a viable alternative to the 'flight' from the core to the suburban edge that most bigger cities have experienced.

Traffic (continued from page 8)

Street near 35th Street, allowing the dangerous at-grade railroad crossing at Adams and 35th Streets to be closed. The North 33rd Street at-grade railroad crossing would also be closed after the City constructs a new North 33rd Street underpass.

The North-South and East-West Roadways allow for the completion of a downtown bypass. Already forming the bottom edge of this bypass system are the one-way pairs of "L" and "K" Streets (Capitol Parkway). Ninth and 10th Streets form the western edge. The new North-South boulevard would complete the eastern side and the East-West Roadway finishes the northern side of a downtown bypass loop. The new loop would permit through motorists to move better, while allowing motorists with business downtown to have more road capacity on the central downtown streets.

Approximately 46,000 cars now cross the BNSF rail lines

each day at 14th, 17th, 33rd and Adams Streets, sometimes having to wait extended periods for passing trains. This number has the potential to increase to 78,000. In addition, rail traffic is expected to continue to grow, causing greater delays and congestion. Building a road viaduct over the BNSF rail south of the Bob Devaney Center is the biggest Antelope Valley roadway component. The structure would carry approximately 40,000 cars north to south and 45,000 cars east to west each day. This viaduct along with the two proposed underpasses in Northeast Lincoln, would allow four dangerous at-grade crossings (14th, 17th, 33rd, and Adams Streets) to be closed. No longer would the tracks block these streets 5 hours per day out of 24 hours. In turn, average travel times and emergency responses would improve.

The new trails along the waterway, near the Devaney Center and sidewalks at the two Northeast Lincoln underpasses will provide safe alternatives to students and other pedestrians racing to beat the descending arms at the railroad crossings or

worse yet, attempting to crawl between parked rail cars on their way to activities.

Today, Holdrege Street is the main link between UNL's city and east campuses. Consequently, approximately 16,000 cars per day use Holdrege Street. With the completion of the Antelope Valley transportation package, traffic on Holdrege Street would be significantly reduced to 5,000 cars per day. The travel distance between the two university campuses will be slightly greater via the new East-West Roadway, but it will be safer, with fewer intersections and trip time is expected to be the same.

Computer models show the new roadways reducing North 27th Street traffic by 5,000 trips per day. However, the new planned growth to the north and to the northeast will continue to add traffic to North 27th Street. Still, North 27th Street is often used by traffic to make northeast to southeast movement across town. With the addition of the Antelope Valley roadways, better traffic flow on these streets.